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MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Preparation for and observance of the International Year of the Family

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 44/82, proclaimed 1994 as the International Year of the Family, and endorsed the main recommendations, objectives and principles for the observance of the Year contained in the Secretary-General's comprehensive outline of a possible programme for the Year (A/44/407), including the recommendations that the theme for the year should be: "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world" (ibid., para. 2 (a)) and that the Commission for Social Development should be designated as the preparatory body and the Economic and Social Council as the co-ordinating body for the Year (ibid., para. 2 (h)).

2. In the same resolution, the Assembly decided that the major activities for the observance of the Year should be concentrated at the local, regional and national levels and assisted by the United Nations and its system of organizations, with a view to creating among Governments, policy-makers and the public a greater awareness of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society and requested the Secretary-General to prepare, on the basis of his report (ibid.) and in consultation with Member States, the specialized agencies concerned and interested intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, a draft programme for the preparation and observance of the Year and to submit a progress report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session.

3. The Assembly, having considered the progress report (A/45/365) submitted to it at its forty-fifth session, adopted resolution 45/133. It welcomed the designation by the Secretary-General of a co-ordinator for the Year and the establishment of an organizational secretariat within the Social Development Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna, and invited Governments to contribute resources, including staff, to that secretariat. The Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to finalize a draft programme for the preparation and observance of the Year and to submit it for priority consideration by the Commission for Social Development at its session in 1991 and to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. It also, inter alia, invited all States to establish national mechanisms, such as co-ordinating committees, promptly to prepare for, observe and follow-up the Year; requested the Secretary-General to establish a voluntary fund for the Year and invited all States and interested organizations to contribute to that Fund.

4. The draft programme set out below responds to the General Assembly's request. It is based on the Secretary-General's comprehensive outline and on statements in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes, and views expressed by Governments in writing, as well as the proposals of other agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. 1/

5. It is not the intention of the United Nations Secretariat to attempt to define or delineate the "ideal family" or to direct "family policy" to specific goals. Rather, as envisaged by the General Assembly, the emphasis is on local and national activities. Responsibility for activities should remain close to the people who will be involved in them and who are expected to benefit from them.

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6. International action will provide support to local and national initiatives that are compatible with the standards concerning basic human rights, fundamental freedoms and social policy adopted by the United Nations. The International Year of the Family offers an opportunity to share experiences, to reconcile differing perceptions and to encourage their harmonious co-existence within and among societies.

I. MAJOR CONCERNS AND SPECIFIC ISSUES REGARDING FAMILIES

A. Family concerns

7. The manner in which families form, establish patterns of behaviour, function and evolve, as well as their relationships with the local community, reflect societal values and expectations and, to some degree, individual choice. Societal values regarding the functions and roles of families differ both among, and within, countries. Similarly, views on the extent to which the community, or Government, should intervene and influence the decisions made in individual families also vary according to differing interpretations of what is good for society, including the role of a central authority in setting the norms for society. Nevertheless, several international legal norms governing the rights of individual family members have been adopted, and most countries have subscribed to their standards. Among these norms are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex).

8. In United Nations instruments, the family is referred to as the basic unit of society; it is appreciated for the important socio-economic functions that it performs. In spite of the many changes in society that have altered its role and functions it continues to provide the natural framework for the emotional, financial and material support essential to the growth and development of its members, particularly infants and children, and for the care of other dependants, including the elderly, disabled and infirm. The family remains a vital means of preserving and transmitting cultural values. In the broader sense, it can, and often does, educate, train, motivate and support its individual members, thereby investing in their future growth and acting as vital resources for development.

9. Nevertheless, changes in social structure, in part a result of economic modernization and the ensuing pressures of development, have in many societies changed the nature of what is considered a family. With economic development and the spread of new forms of economic activity, family-based, co-operative, subsistence labour is, to a large extent, being replaced by work for wages, specialization of labour and concentration of activities in a workplace which is removed from the home. Indeed, in many families members spend a great deal less time together than they used to. There are many reasons for this change, including the fact that more members work outside the home, and that more and more children are attending school or spending their free time with their peers rather than with their family.

10. Many other changes resulting from economic development have affected the family. Although not universal, the general trend has been towards reduced family size and increased emphasis on the "nuclear family". For example:

(a) Improved access to medical care, new knowledge about diseases and the spread of information about the importance of sanitation and the proper care of infants have meant that babies are more likely to survive past the first year of life; widespread personal control over reproduction has reduced unwanted pregnancies, resulting in smaller family units;

(b) Urbanization has been credited with encouraging changes in personal values, which in turn have affected the family. One effect has been to decrease the importance of extended family relationships, particularly those that were based on concern for mutual protection. Increasing concentrations of population in urban areas have often resulted in the physical separation of extended families and encouraged a sense of autonomy and independence, particularly among younger people. Family solidarity is perhaps less of a prerequisite for sheer survival;

(c) In some families, as norms of equality are put into practice, there is a growing tendency for men and women to share the household tasks.

11. Improvements in communication, transport and access to information have allowed individuals increased contact with ideas and behavioural norms beyond their traditional spheres. Formal education, which has expanded rapidly in many areas, has also introduced many new concepts. Greater numbers of people both in towns and in rural areas are not only becoming more aware of the opportunities for different life-styles but, through improved information and increased mobility, are also more likely to make individual decisions and take individual action without the approval of extended family members. All over the world, new ideas are exerting a greater influence on societies than ever before and the changes in life-styles that distinguish one generation from the next continue to increase.

12. These changes are generally accepted as positive: they provide evidence that individuals are exerting more and more control over their own destinies and are enjoying additional opportunities for more diversified lives. As a result, however, many people now feel less responsible for family relationships. In addition, the ability of many families to meet their basic needs has been weakened by circumstances beyond their control. The result is a reduced ability or willingness on the part of many families to meet the basic needs of some of their members. This has meant that "outsiders", whether from private or government agencies, international organizations or charities, have had to make up the difference, often at great cost. Of course, government intervention in the form of social welfare activities has not just been a means of filling the gap left by the family's failure to provide services; much government action has represented a positive attempt to provide needed services to all citizens by right. Whatever the reason, the fact is that in many places government responsibility for providing basic needs has to a large extent taken the place of family responsibility, and this is reflected in the increasing public expenditure on social and welfare services in many countries.

13. The fact that, in different places, these changes have taken place at different times, at different speeds and to a different extent has important policy implications. It has meant that there are many different types of family structure, with different strengths and weaknesses. It has also meant that, both within and among countries, any image of what constitutes the "ideal family" will differ greatly. Policies affecting the family should seek to avoid promoting, implicitly or explicitly, a single, ideal image of the family.

14. The only thing that is consistent about families is their variety. In the positive sense, families are capable of playing an important role as agents of development and constructive change in society; at the same time, the negative aspects of society, including social problems, exploitation and abuse, are also often evident within family relationships. In some parts of the world, family structures are breaking down, fuelling increased social dysfunction and maladjustment. Male family members may migrate to look for work or may abandon the household altogether, creating additional burdens for the women and children who remain behind. In other places, family expectations and the commitments they entail remain strong; when these expectations are expressed in the context of unequal family relationships, individual initiative and personal development may be hindered.

15. In short, there is no simple view of the family and no easy definition of family policy; to some degree, all policies affect families. Yet, despite the major changes most societies have undergone in recent decades, policies and programmes still tend to be based on concepts and family models that may no longer reflect reality. Accordingly, while general trends may be known, there seems to be a great need to use whatever knowledge is available to create more relevant and appropriate policies directed at the family, while recognizing that many policies that are seemingly of no great relevance may indeed have unseen or long-range implications.

16. Institutional capabilities should, therefore, be strengthened. The first goal might be to encourage organizations and agencies, whether governmental or non-governmental, national or international, to recognize that their decisions and actions will usually have an impact on how families will be formed, whether they will survive or not, and how well they function as nurturers and providers. The second goal might then be to improve the formulation and implementation of "family-sensitive" policies, assuming that they can be generally agreed in a society, and to devise appropriate means to deal with a range of specific problems related to the family as a unit.

17. Furthermore, the effects of economic change on family structure and on families' abilities to discharge their functions need to be better understood. Interestingly, both positive and negative economic change would seem to have a strong impact on the family.

18. In many countries, in recent years, economic retrenchment, structural adjustment programmes and the costs associated with government provision of social welfare services have resulted in cutbacks in services. Increasing burdens are placed on families, and particularly on female members. The result has often been to weaken the fabric of family unity.

19. Economic change, whether reflected in expansion or retrenchment, will lead to new and perhaps unfamiliar pressures on traditional family roles and relationships. Varying effects on the family have been attributed to such diverse phenomena as migration, agrarian change, urbanization and population growth. Social changes will continue and families will continue to evolve, perhaps in unpredictable ways. The family is not static and policy must continually evolve as well, if it is to remain relevant and effective.

B. Specific family issues

20. Since issues that influence the situation of families vary from one country and region to another, local and national authorities and organizations

should establish their own priority issues. Local and national endeavours, both public and private, should be supported by regional and international action, particularly through the sharing of information. The following categorization of issues, based on the views and information received, may suggest a starting point for the identification of local and national priorities.

1. Issue one: Strengthening the family's ability to meet its own needs

21. The family remains a primary source of nurturing, as well as a conduit for the transmission of values, culture and information, particularly to children and young people. The family should, therefore, be aided and encouraged to fulfil these important functions for the benefit of all society. For example, even limited government expenditure to educate and encourage adults to practise appropriate parenting techniques, whereby, inter alia, responsibility for child-rearing is shared by both parents, can result in vastly improved health, education and socialization of children, thus lowering the overall costs of social services. Attention may be given to:

(a) Encouraging families to recognize the health requirements of members and enhancing their ability to provide primary health care in the home, inter alia, by providing information on pre-natal and maternal health care, the spacing of births, proper nutrition, ways to improve food storage and preparation and the importance of having access to clean water supplies;

(b) Encouraging families to recognize the importance of education for all family members - especially women and girls - and enhancing their involvement in the provision of formal and informal educational opportunities;

(c) Acknowledging that the ability of families to provide adequate care for their older members may be put under strain, and that families who are taking care of the older generation at home may need extra resources; at the same time, the fact should be recognized that elderly family members often have an important position within the family structure and in decision-making, and the contribution they make to the family and the community should be encouraged;

(d) Providing more information to strengthen families' capacity to prevent disabilities, to detect impairment at an early stage, and to provide basic rehabilitation of disabled persons; families may be supported in these endeavours by government assurance of the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, thereby encouraging their better integration into the community;

(e) Providing assistance and information to families to encourage prevention of violence in the home and of delinquency, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, irresponsible sexuality and the spread of diseases, especially the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS); also assisting in the rehabilitation of addicts, as well as both victims of crime and criminal offenders.

2. Issue two: Clarifying and understanding the balance between how the family can satisfy its needs and what it can expect through public provision of services

22. Changes in economic conditions have altered and indeed, at times, undermined the ability of families to meet their needs as a unit and as individuals.

This may create stress or alienation for the individual, may further weaken family relationships, or may increase the demand for public services.

23. At the same time, a trend towards limiting public provision of social services has placed additional burdens on families, and on female members in particular, to meet basic family needs. This may cause families to assume direct responsibility for providing needed services or it may require them to assume additional financial commitments to pay for services previously provided free.

24. When making decisions about providing or cutting back services, Governments should consider how these decisions will affect families, directly or indirectly. When services are reduced, apparent savings of public expenditure may conceal great costs in terms of private deprivation, as families struggle to satisfy their needs; likewise, investments in services may be squandered if they fail to take into account the considerations that influence families' ability and willingness to partake of them.

3. Recognizing the effect of societal ills on family relationships and acknowledging that government policy intervention may be needed to counter resulting negative behaviour or exploitation in the family

25. Because of the intimate nature of family relationships, negative behaviour or exploitation may be tolerated within families. In line with the concepts of equality between women and men and the rights of all individual family members, social policy may seek to educate and inform family behaviour to discourage antisocial or detrimental practices. Such policy might involve:

(a) Education and activities to foster equality between women and men, including equality in their roles as spouses and parents, thereby improving the status of women in the context of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; 2/ furthermore, information and education might encourage a more equitable distribution of family resources and more flexible sharing of household and parental responsibilities in order to improve opportunities for women within and outside the family;

(b) Information, legal support and counselling to assist in the prevention of all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse of family members, both physical and psychological;

(c) Assistance and encouragement to families to nurture and protect children and facilitate the transition from adolescence to responsible adulthood and the world of work, in the context of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children (A/45/625, annex) and the Plan of Action for Implementing the Declaration in the 1990s (ibid.), adopted by the World Summit for Children, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25);

(d) Education to encourage and develop values and behaviour patterns that contribute to responsible citizenship, ensure equal rights for all, discourage discrimination and protect the environment.

II. PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

26. The preparation for the International Year of the Family will be carried out in three phases: (a) the preliminary phase, in 1991, geared to setting up and mobilizing organizational structures and identifying priority issues; (b) the preparatory phase, in the biennium 1992-1993, focusing on measures to tackle the priority issues and on activities for the observance of the Year; and (c) the observance phase, in 1994, during which activities will take place and programmes implemented. If deemed appropriate, consideration could be given to undertaking a phase of evaluation, after 1994, during which a plan for follow-up action might be established.

27. "The family" is a concept noted for its diversity. It cannot be over-emphasized that there is no single definition of the "ideal family situation", which is a subjective concept. Not only does it vary from one culture to another but it has often defied definition within a single society. It is, consequently, essential that the International Year of the Family should be observed foremost at the local level, relying on the independent initiatives of people seeking their own self-improvement. This strategy is consistent with the concept that people should participate in their own development.

28. Thus, a programme of activities that seeks to reflect honestly the issues and concerns of the family must be sufficiently flexible to recognize the myriad situations "the family" represents, while acknowledging the rights of individual family members. To achieve this flexibility, the programme should not describe a list of activities to be undertaken, or suggest that certain policies are appropriate for all families. The responsibility for determining what is appropriate must lie at the local and national level. This does not suggest that regional and international actions are unimportant; the programme must, however, serve as a constant reminder that regional and international actions can only support local initiatives. For them to do anything else would risk robbing local initiative of its meaning.

29. Notwithstanding this fundamental approach, there is a great deal that can be done to help the people involved at the local and national levels to address their attention to the concerns of families. This is particularly true with regard to families needing assistance to ensure their day-to-day survival.

A. Concepts for national action

30. A primary function of the International Year of the Family is to create among policy-makers and the public at large a greater appreciation of the family as the fundamental unit of society. An invaluable achievement of the Year would be to strengthen general awareness of the influences that affect the family and may undermine its ability to function effectively. While it may be inappropriate to speak of creating one over-arching family policy in a country, it is nevertheless true that all policies affect, to a greater or lesser extent, the ability of families to function. An important and long-lasting consequence of the Year can be to establish an awareness among government officials and policy-makers of the importance of considering the implications of particular policy measures on families.

31. To encourage greater awareness among policy-makers and the public of issues of concern to families, and to ensure that the implications of government policies for the family will be more appropriately considered, Governments may decide:

(a) To encourage a public information campaign to inform people of the proclamation of the International Year of the Family and its theme, objectives and priorities; in this regard, they may wish to consider how to involve the private sector and seek the assistance of both international organizations and agencies and non-governmental organizations;

(b) To support and extend the process of dialogue and communication with local and grass-root groups and organizations, and thereby encourage their active involvement in designing and implementing projects and activities for and with families;

(c) To continue the dissemination of information about international legal instruments relevant to the rights of individual family members, including especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex);

(d) To undertake a general review of national legislation to clarify its real or potential impact on families. In this connection, it might be necessary to emphasize that much legislation may have unforeseen consequences for families; government departments or agencies that would seem to have little involvement with family issues might be surprised at the indirect effect of many of their decisions and operations;

(e) To establish a national committee and invest it with responsibility for encouraging, supporting and co-ordinating local initiatives undertaken in conjunction with the Year;

(f) To encourage and support increased attention to the family as a subject worthy of academic investigation; in particular, attention might be given, inter alia, to investigating the types of family structure prevalent in the national society, the concerns of different types of families and the impact on them of various government policies;

(g) To develop and implement, as deemed appropriate, national celebratory activities in observance of the Year.

32. In order for the International Year of the Family to achieve any degree of success it must win the support of the non-governmental organizations for its objectives. Many of these organizations complain that they are often treated as if they were of secondary importance to programme implementation and are considered valuable only as the means of implementing decisions or programmes decided by others. In fact, non-governmental organizations are important partners of government and the international agencies. They often possess skills and practical information and strong local and international networks, which enable them to undertake activities that other organizations cannot. Many also enjoy a reputation for effectiveness, appropriateness of approach and fairness.

33. To encourage and ensure the active involvement of non-governmental organizations, Governments might consider:

(a) Ensuring that non-governmental organizations are widely represented and enjoy appropriate status in the national co-ordinating committee for the Year;

(b) Recognizing the skills non-governmental organizations possess and allowing them the opportunity to develop and implement programmes in areas where they have the expertise;

(c) Encouraging two-way communication between representatives of non-governmental organizations and government agencies.

34. The private sector affects families in important ways. Most obviously, it is often the major provider of employment, thus ensuring families' economic survival. Private firms and organizations are also major providers of social services and influence and support leisure-time activity. The impact of the sector on families is strong, involving nearly every aspect of daily life. Private firms have an interest in supporting strong family ties, in so far as they have a positive effect on employee productivity and the stability of the community in which they operate. Clearly, there is an important role for private firms in encouraging activities in observance of the Year.

35. Governments may wish to consider how they may best encourage private-sector involvement in order:

(a) To increase private investment providing services useful to families, for example by encouraging private firms to establish appropriate day-care facilities for the children of employees;

(b) To extend the reach of public information activities through expanded use of their communication networks;

(c) To mobilize contributions to support observance of the Year.

B. Concepts for regional and international action

36. Regional and international activities will support local and national initiatives. They are, therefore, considered together in the following considerations for guiding such action:

(a) The activities of the United Nations and its system of organizations, including the regional commissions, will complement and support major activities at the local and national levels;

(b) The impact of the Year can be greatly enhanced through the support of all interested parties, and this can only be mobilized through effective public information. An international campaign to provide information and to promote the Year is essential;

(c) Activities must be co-ordinated so as to increase the impact of the Year and to avoid duplication;

(d) International support for the activities of non-governmental organizations is essential.

37. The Commission on the Status of Women, as part of its long-term work programme, set out in Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/24 and enlarged upon in the recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (Council resolution 1990/15, annex), will consider several priority themes that are particularly relevant to the International

Year of the Family. The theme of vulnerable women, including migrant women, will be considered in 1991 and includes, inter alia, the issue of female heads of household. The issue of women in extreme poverty, to be considered in 1993, will also deal with the problems of households headed by women, which have been identified as the poorest of the poor. In 1994, two themes to be considered are highly relevant to international discussion of issues related to the family: the theme of women in urban areas, which will emphasize population, nutrition and health factors for women in development, including migration, consumption of illicit drugs and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS); and the theme of measures to eradicate violence against women in the family and society. Each of the discussions in the Commission on the Status of Women will be preceded by preparatory expert group meetings and seminars.

38. The regional commissions would be expected to promote the exchange of views and experience at the regional level and encourage co-ordination of efforts among intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, for example by establishing or strengthening organizational arrangements, such as inter-agency working groups, structures for the co-ordination and support of non-governmental efforts and a regional network of focal points. They should also focus on the need to provide technical assistance programmes, including advisory services, to Governments, upon their request, to help them to develop plans and programmes in the context of the Year.

39. Responsibility for co-ordinating the preparation and observance of the Year within the United Nations system has been vested in the United Nations Office at Vienna. It will provide substantive servicing to the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, in their functions as preparatory and co-ordinating bodies, and will prepare progress reports, as required. The Director of the Social Development Division, of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna, has been designated Co-ordinator for the International Year of the Family. A secretariat has also been established from within existing resources. In concerted action with other interested bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, the secretariat will endeavour to encourage, at the global level, the widest possible range of activities.

40. A particularly important function for the secretariat of the Year will be to promote the global exchange of information and experience by, inter alia, organizing new or strengthening existing networks of communication and co-operation among interested organizations; compiling information on family-related issues in different countries; encouraging the sharing of information among countries about programmes and activities related to the Year; and organizing international meetings when appropriate. In this connection, the secretariat will encourage the establishment of an international network of focal points for family issues and the Year, to facilitate the flow of information. It will also promote a network of research institutions specializing in family issues and hopes to establish and maintain a data bank and a clearing house of pertinent information.

41. In order to assist Governments that ask for advice, the secretariat will develop programmes of technical assistance and advisory services on relevant issues and carry out fund-raising activities to support the proposed voluntary fund for the Year, the management of which will be the responsibility of the United Nations Office at Vienna.

42. Consideration has been given to the establishment of an inter-agency working group on the Year, consisting of organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. Its primary function would be to ensure a co-ordinated and consolidated approach within the system to the observance of the Year and to avoid any duplication or overlap of efforts.

43. Many bodies and agencies of the United Nations system are implementing programmes that affect families, even if the effect is not readily or immediately apparent. While not all of these organizations may be in a position to consider developing and implementing new programmes in the context of the Year, they could make an important contribution by evaluating their existing programmes to clarify their impact on families, in line with the evaluation Governments will undertake. Bodies and agencies would then be encouraged to include a "family impact consideration" in their programme planning and evaluation.

44. On the basis of existing committees at Vienna and in New York and Paris of non-governmental organizations concerned with the family, consideration will be given to establishing an international non-governmental umbrella committee, under the stewardship of the secretariat of the International Year of the Family, in order to strengthen consultation and collaboration between the United Nations and the non-governmental-organization sector on the Year, effectively and economically.

45. Finally, the secretariat would be responsible for developing an international plan for follow-up action, should such an instrument be deemed appropriate.

III. FUNDING

46. In order to carry out effectively their substantial mandates in regard to the International Year of the Family, the United Nations Secretariat, including the regional commissions, will require additional resources. To date, the General Assembly has not made specific budgetary provision for the Year. All preparatory work has so far been made possible through adjustments in the resources already provided to the United Nations Office at Vienna for family-related activities. The Secretary-General will submit to the General Assembly, at its forty-sixth session, proposals for supporting necessary preparatory activities for the Year in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

47. The General Assembly, in its resolution 45/133, requested the Secretary-General to establish a voluntary fund for the preparation and observance of the Year and invited all States and interested organizations to contribute to that fund. It is hoped that Governments and other interested organizations will respond favourably to this appeal and make generous contributions, in cash or in kind.

48. The extra-budgetary resources made available through the Fund would finance international activities for the preparation and observance of the Year for which regular budget resources are not available. It would also support the family-related activities of Governments in developing countries.

IV. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

49. In order for the International Year of the Family to be relevant and appropriate to ongoing development efforts, it will be necessary to evaluate progress and the problems encountered during its preparation and observance. The draft programme has been elaborated with this in mind. Monitoring and evaluation are considered an integral part of the programme.

Notes

1/ Proposals or comments were submitted by the following Governments: Albania, Algeria (and Algeria on behalf of the Union of Arab Maghreb Countries), Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Colombia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland (and Finland on behalf of the Nordic countries), Fiji, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Holy See, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Italy (and Italy on behalf of the European Communities), Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire.

Replies or comments were received from the following members of the United Nations system: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), United Nations Environment Programme, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, World Food Council, International Labour Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The following intergovernmental organizations outside the United Nations system provided comments or proposals: African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Colombo Plan, Commission of the European Communities, Commonwealth Secretariat, Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Council of Europe, European Parliament, Inter-American Children's Institute of the Organization of American States, Inter-American Development Bank, League of Arab States, Nordic Council, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Organization of African Unity, Organization of the Islamic Conference, Union Douanière et Economique de l'Afrique Centrale.

Comments were also made by the following non-governmental organizations: Associated Country Women of the World, Foundation for the Rights of the Family (PRODEFA)-International Secretariat, International Catholic Child Bureau, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Confederation of Midwives, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council on the Management of Population Programs, International Council on Social Welfare, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International

Planned Parenthood Federation, League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, NGO Committee on the Family, New York, on behalf of 22 member organizations (the Vienna headquarters of the NGO Committee on the Family had, in 1988, provided an analysis of responses to a questionnaire on views concerning the International Year of the Family that had been circulated among its participating organizations), Soroptimist International, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Federation of Trade Unions, World Futures Studies Federation, World Movement of Mothers, World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations.

2/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

Annex I

OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY*

A. Objectives

1. The objectives of the International Year of the Family are to stimulate local, national and international action as part of a sustained long-term effort:

(a) To increase awareness of family issues among Governments as well as in the private sector: to highlight the importance of families, encourage a better understanding of their functions and problems, promote knowledge of the economic, social and demographic processes affecting families and their members, and focus attention upon the rights and responsibilities of all family members;

(b) To strengthen national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families;

(c) To stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting, and affected by, the situation of families;

(d) To enhance the effectiveness of local, regional and national efforts to carry out specific programmes concerning families by generating new activities and strengthening existing ones;

(e) To improve collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations in support of multisectoral activities;

(f) To build upon the results of international activities concerning women, children, youth, the aged and the disabled.

B. Principles

2. The following principles should underly all activities connected with the Year:

(a) The family constitutes the basic unit of society and therefore warrants special attention. Hence, the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to families so that they may fully assume their responsibilities within the community, pursuant to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (General Assembly resolution 217 A (III)), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex), the Declaration on Social Progress and Development (General Assembly resolution 2542 (XXIV)), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex);

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*See the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Families in the development process: preparation for and observance of an international family year (A/44/407), sect. III.

(b) Families assume diverse forms and functions from one country to another, and within each national society. These express the diversity of individual preferences and societal conditions. Consequently, the international year should encompass and address itself to the needs of all families;

(c) Activities undertaken in preparation for, and in observance of, an international year should seek to promote the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms accorded to all individuals by the set of internationally agreed instruments formulated under the aegis of the United Nations, whatever the status of each individual within the family, and whatever the form and condition of that family;

(d) Policies should aim at fostering equality between women and men within families and at bringing about a fuller sharing of domestic responsibilities and employment opportunities;

(e) Activities preparatory to and in observance of the international year should be undertaken at all levels - local, national, regional and international; their primary focus, however, will be at the local and national levels;

(f) Programmes should support families in the discharge of their functions, rather than providing substitutes for such functions: they should promote the inherent strengths of families, including their great capacity for self-reliance, and stimulate self-sustaining activities on their behalf. They should give expression to an integrated perspective of families, their members, community and society;

(g) The Year should constitute an event within a continuing process; measures will be needed to ensure appropriate evaluation of progress made and obstacles encountered both prior to and during the year, in order to ensure its success and adequate follow-up.

Annex II

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES SUGGESTED TO GOVERNMENTS, TO THE ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM, TO OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PREPARATION FOR AND OBSERVANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY

A. Governments

1. The main text of this report has suggested some important considerations for Governments in preparing for and observing the International Year of the Family. Activities will be developed within the overall context of family issues, problems and concerns. For convenience, a check-list of suggestions and actions is suggested below, and Governments may wish to consult with this list as they develop programmes and activities.

2. Governments may consider preparing a national programme of activities for the International Year of the Family. Some suggested programme elements are:

(a) Establishment of a national co-ordinating body for the International Year of the Family;

(b) Identification and implementation of a programme of activities to observe the Year;

(c) Establishment of a public information campaign to enhance awareness of the Year and of family issues, as well as to promote the national programme;

(d) Mobilization of human and financial resources;

(e) Assessment of the situation of families, preparation of studies and profiles on families, identification of issues and problems;

(f) Selection of a few crucial issues for specific attention in the short term;

(g) Identification of long-term objectives and setting of family-specific targets to improve prospects for socio-economic development and progress;

(h) Identification and implementation of specific measures to deal with the priority issues selected;

(i) Organization of local and national conferences, as appropriate;

(j) Encouragement of research and data collection pertaining to the family;

(k) Review of existing national legislation pertaining to families and consideration of new legislation or policies to improve their situation;

(l) Review and strengthening of local, regional and national structures responsible for family-related issues;

(m) Strengthening and extension of the dialogue and communication with local and grass-root groups and organizations, thereby encouraging their involvement in designing and implementing projects and activities for families;

(n) Continued dissemination of information on international legal instruments relevant to the rights of individual family members, including especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex);

(o) Development and adoption, as deemed appropriate, of a long-term national strategy on families in socio-economic development and progress.

3. In order to implement some or all of these suggestions, States were invited by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/133 to take prompt action to establish national mechanisms, such as co-ordinating committees, for the International Year of the Family. The co-ordinating body may be set up within or outside governmental institutions, but it should be located so as to ensure the best discharge of its functions. Experience gained during the observance of previous international years may be drawn on and close relationships may be established with existing co-ordinating mechanisms, such as those established for the advancement of women, for crime and drug abuse control, and for children, youth, the aging and disabled persons. It should have adequate political influence and high public visibility and might, therefore, be presided over by a prominent public figure, preferably at a high policy-making and decision-making level. Its membership should reflect the multi-disciplinary nature of family issues. It may include, as appropriate, representatives of government agencies
concerned, non-governmental organizations, associations, the private sector and individuals.

4. The co-ordinating body may be assigned responsibility for:

(a) Developing and implementing of a national programme of activities for the preparation for and observance of the Year;

(b) Promoting effective participation of all sectors in the activities for the Year, including governmental and non-governmental agencies, the private sector, families and individuals;

(c) Monitoring and assessing progress achieved during the preparations for the Year and identifying the problems encountered;

(d) Providing high-level visibility to and support for the Year; making public opinion sensitive to family-related issues and problems, and providing leadership to articulate family concerns;

(e) Mobilizing resources for the implementation of the national programme of activities;

(f) Collecting national information and data relating to the family;

(g) Serving as national focal point for the Year and maintaining effective communication with the national and local bodies and organizations concerned;

(h) Acting as liaison with the United Nations secretariat for the Year and with the organizations of the United Nations system;

B. Organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations

5. Regional and international activities should support local and national initiatives. As previously mentioned, regional commissions and international organizations and agencies, as well as other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, in the context of the International Year of the Family, may wish to review their programmes and activities with a view to achieving a greater awareness of their impact on families. The following is a brief check-list of other activities which the commissions, organizations and agencies may wish to consider to prepare for and observe the Year:

(a) Providing support for an international information and awareness-raising campaign to promote the Year and promoting the exchange and dissemination of information and experience world-wide;

(b) Mobilizing resources for family-related programmes;

(c) Providing substantive and organizational support for governmental action, including policy formulation, programme implementation and celebratory activities to observe the Year, and involving technical assistance programmes when requested;

(d) Promoting data collection and support for research on family-related topics;

(e) Contributing to any special meetings of United Nations legislative bodies which are deemed appropriate;

(f) Evaluating, as relevant, the progress made during the preparatory process and contributing, as appropriate, to an international plan for follow-up action.

C. Proposed activities of the Co-ordinator and secretariat of the International Year of the Family

6. Responsibility for co-ordinating the preparation and observance of the International Year of the Family at the international level has been assigned to the United Nations Office at Vienna. The Director of the Social Development Division of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the unit responsible for family issues, has been designated the Co-ordinator for the International Year of the Family. The principal functions of the Co-ordinator are to stimulate and co-ordinate international activities in support of local, regional and national actions for the preparation and observance of the Year.

7. A small organizational secretariat for the Year, headed by the Co-ordinator, has also been established within the Social Development Division. The secretariat, in concerted action with other relevant Secretariat units and bodies, and subject to available resources, will:

(a) Stimulate, co-ordinate and catalyse activities for the preparation and observance of the Year;

(b) Provide substantive services to the preparatory and co-ordinating bodies for the Year, as well as other mechanisms of co-ordination for the Year within the United Nations;

(c) Prepare progress reports on programme implementation;

(d) Promote an exchange of information and experience, through, inter alia, the organization of international meetings and the compilation of information on family-related issues in different countries;

(e) Establish an international network of focal points for the Year to facilitate the flow of information between Governments and national co-ordinating bodies, the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;

(f) Promote the establishment of and provide support to, a network of research institutions specializing in family issues;

(g) Establish and maintain a data bank and a clearing-house on specific family-related issues;

(h) Help the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat to implement and co-ordinate an international public information and promotional campaign;

(i) Advise on the development of programmes of technical assistance and advisory services on family-related policies and programmes;

(j) Provide substantive support to the voluntary Fund for the Year and recommend activities to be supported by the Fund, consistent with the objectives and priorities of the Year, as well as carry out fund-raising activities; it will also mobilize and channel financial and material assistance for national activities in developing countries.